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INTERESTING FACTS

In the Lives of Two Lowell Women.

SARAH HOSMER. V.

Dr. Strong in "Our Country" has this allusion to a lady who died in this city about fifteen years ago and is still well remembered by many residents, for her devotion to the cause of missions, mingled with a few eccentricities of manner: "Sarah Hosmer, of Lowell, though a poor woman, supported a student in the Nestorian seminary, who became a preacher of Christ. Five times she gave fifty dollars, earning the money in a factory, and sent out five native pastors to Christian work. When more than sixty years old she longed to furnish Nestoria with one more preacher of Christ; and, living in an attic, she took in sewing until she had accomplished her cherished purpose."

A few simple facts in the history of Miss Hosmer, gleaned from an article written for the Eliot church semi-centennial, a few years ago, and from those who knew her well, may be of interest. She was born in Concord in 1691 and was a distant relative of Harriet Hosmer, the artist. In her youth she attended the Unitarian church in her native town and was subsequently converted to the evangelical faith. She formed the first Sunday school in Concord, gathering the children at her own home for instruction. She was very active and charitable, spending little for herself and much for others. She gave one hundred and fifty dollars towards building a church in Waltham. Going from that place to Methuen, she gave fifty dollars to the church in that town and the same amount to the Orthodox church at Concord with a communion service and the rent of three pews, which she had bought. She came to Lowell in 1835 with very little money. Entering one of the cotton mills she brought her earnings to Mr. Hapgood Wright for safe keeping and investment, most of her charities being paid by him at her request. They are thought to have averaged from one hundred to two hundred dollars a year during the last twenty years of her life. She gave much to foreign missions in various ways, paying for the education of four Burmese young men for missionaries to the heathen, from whom she received letters of grateful acknowledgement.

She was very conscientious. Having on one occasion promised a young man one hundred dollars to invest in business, she let him have it, though told that she would lose it, and she did lose it. She let a clergyman have several hundred dollars, which was all the money she had. She was also very industrious. Though nearly blind, she often worked when physically unable to do so, rather than remain idle. She refused a comfortable home with her sister, that she might toil for others. She took a poor child to educate, but it died at the age of ten years. She used to live in rooms above what is now Butler's drug store, at Tower's corner, and there she did her sewing. A Miss Farr kept school down stairs and frequently sent children up stairs to her for

admonition and correction. She was an earnest member of the Appleton street church, (now the Eliot church) under Rev. Uzziah C. Burnap, hiring a seat in the gallery that she might economize and have more to give away to missions. She was a regular caller at Abel Whitney's bookstore, where her missionary paper came, and she always knew in which pigeon hole to find it. She wore her dresses shorter than the average and attracted some attention by other peculiarities, but everybody respected and esteemed her as an honest and conscientious woman, not many knowing of her self-sacrificing acts and generous nature. She died in Lowell in 1871, and was buried at Concord, beside her adopted child. A monument marks the spot where reposes all that was mortal of a sincere, Christian woman, who doubtless made the world better by having lived in it.

LOUISA OSBORNE.

It may not be known to many that the land upon which the first Christian church built in Ceylon, India, was given by a heathen orphan girl converted to Christianity through the contributions of Miss Louisa Osborne, who is now an inmate of the Old Ladies' Home, in this city. The story, as told by one cognizant of the facts, in a missionary publication, is an interesting one, and shows what self-denial and devotion can accomplish.

Miss Osborne was in her earlier years employed as a cook in the family of the late Prof. Peabody, of Dartmouth college, at Hanover, N. H. One evening, after attending a religious meeting, she went to Mrs. Peabody and said: "I have just heard that if anybody would give twenty dollars a year they could support a child in Ceylon, and I have decided to do it. They say that along with the money I can send a name, and I have come to ask if you would object to my sending yours." At that time wages for housework ranged from one dollar to one dollar and a half per week; and yet this self-denying girl had been for a long time contributing half a dollar each month at a monthly concert for foreign mission. Some of her friends expostulated with her for giving away so much, in her circumstances, as the time might come when she could not earn anything. She replied: "I have thought it all over and concluded I would rather give what I can while I am earning, and then if I lose my health and cannot work, why, I can go to the poor-house. You see, they have no poor-houses in heathen lands, for it is only Christians who care for the poor." So she continued for years to contribute twenty dollars annually for the support of a young Hindoo girl at the girls' school in Oodooville, whom she named Maria Peabody, after the professor's wife. The girl was converted to Christianity and became devoted to the cause of religion.

At that time the native Christians, long worshipping in bungalows and old Dutch chapels, decided that they must have a church built for themselves, and much enthusiasm was shown in the enterprise. To the astonishment of all, Maria Peabody.

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the lone orphan girl, came forward and offered to give the land upon which to build, which was the best site in her native village. In making this gift she renounced all hope of being married, in the eyes of every native, for it was her marriage portion and all she owned in the world. This course was regarded as a terrible step in the East, and some of her friends tried to dissuade her from such an act of self-renunciation. She replied: "No; I have given it to Jesus and he has accepted it. You must." The generous deed became known, and reached the ear of a young theological student, who was also a beneficiary of the mission, and touched his heart. He could not rest until he had sought and won the heart of the noble Hindoo maiden, and the acquaintance resulted in marriage.

The fact that some one in the United States had for years been contributing twenty dollars annually for the support of this young Hindoo girl was known in Ceylon, but the name of the donor was unknown. About that time, Rev. Dr. Poor, a missionary from Ceylon visiting America, was curious to discover who the faithful sower might be and report the wonderful harvest. In the course of his travels he found himself at Hanover and preached to the students of Dartmouth college. In conversation he happened to hear some one speak of Mrs. Peabody, and exclaimed: "Peabody, Peabody—what Peabody?," "Mrs. Peabody, who resides here, the widow of a former professor," was the answer. "Oh, I must see her before I leave," he replied. After an introduction at the lady's house he said, "I have come to bring you a glad report, for I cannot but think that it is to you that we in Ceylon owe the opportunity of educating one who has proved as lovely and consistent a native convert as we have ever had. She is exceptionally interesting, devotedly pious and bears your name." "Alas!" replied the lady, "although the girl bears my name, I wish I could claim the honor of educating her! It belongs

not to me, but to my poor and faithful cook, Louisa Osborne."

Dr. Poor afterwards learned that Miss Osborne lived in Lowell, and in due time he visited this city. At the close of an evening service before a crowded house he related among missionary incidents, as a crowning triumph, the story of Louisa Osborne and Maria Peabody. His heart glowing with zeal he exclaimed, "If there is any one present who knows anything of that good woman, Louisa Osborne, and will lead me to her, I shall be greatly obliged." After the benediction had been pronounced and the audience was dispersing, Dr. Poor passed down one of the aisles chatting with the pastor, and noticed a quiet little figure apparently waiting for him. It was Louisa Osborne. Hastening toward her he exclaimed with suppressed emotion, "I believe this is my sister in Christ, Louise Osborne." "That is my name" was the calm reply. "Well, God bless you, Louisa; you have heard my report and know all," said the missionary; "but before we part, probably never to meet again in this world, I want you to answer me one question: What made you do it?" In a low and trembling voice and with downcast eyes she replied, "Well, I do not know, but I guess it was my Lord Jesus."

Miss Osborne came to Lowell many years ago and connected herself with the John street Congregational church in 1849, when it was formed, having previously belonged to the Appleton street, now the Eliot church, and subsequently for a short time to the First church. She was for twenty years a member of Mr. J. J. Judkins's Sunday school class, and still attends the ministrations of the sanctuary when she is able. When met on the street or elsewhere, she still presents the same unassuming demeanor, and retains a deep interest in the cause for which she gave so liberally in times past.)

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